

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BELFAS 00010 121227Z

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SY-05 MCT-01 HA-05 SCS-06 CA-01

USSS-00 AID-05 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00

NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-07

L-03 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OC-06 CCO-00 /080 W

-----127941 121249Z /46

R 121150Z JAN 78

FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1840

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

UNCLAS BELFAST 10

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, UK

SUBJECT: FIRE BOMBS IN BELFAST

1. POOR BELFAST.

2. UNDER A SHARP WINTRY SKY, WITH SNOW COVERING THE HILLS SURROUNDING THE CITY, ABOUT TEN FIRE BOMBS HAD EXPLODED IN BELFAST AS OF DRAFTING TIME AT 0920 (JANUARY 12). MANY WENT OFF A LITTLE AFTER SEVEN, INCLUDING THREE IN KING STREET, PARALLEL TO THE CONGEN'S QUEEN STREET, BORDERING THE SECURITY BARRIER AND A SHORT BLOCK AWAY. SMOKE IS STILL POURING FROM A GOOD-SIZED CORNER BUILDING, WHICH WILL BE GUTTED. ONE SOLDIER AND A POLICEMAN WAS INJURED IN CHECKING THIS INITIAL SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS.

3. OTHER TARGETS DOWNTOWN OR IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY INCLUDED A FURNITURE STORE, A POST OFFICE, A HARDWARE STORE, AND ONE OF THE FEW INNS IN THE AREA STILL SERVING A DECENT MEAL. TRAFFIC WAS CHAOTIC, PARTICULARLY SINCE SOLDIERS CONTINUED THE EARLY MORNING PRACTICE OF SPOT CHECKING INCOMING VEHICLES.

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 BELFAS 00010 121227Z

4. OVERNIGHT A PLEASANT PUB IN THE BELFAST SUBURB OF CARRICKFERGUS WAS BURNT OUT, AND BOMBS EXPLODED WITH LITTLE DAMAGE IN TWO SMALLER TOWNS. YESTERDAY AFTERNOON A FIRE BLAZED FOR FIVE HOURS IN A LARGE WAREHOUSE JUST OUTSIDE THE SECURITY BARRIER ABOUT TWO BLOCKS FROM THE CONGEN. SILENT CROWDS WATCHED THE FIRE ALL AFTERNOON. TWO ARMED MEN PLANTED THE FIRE BOMBS. STAFF GOT

OUT BEFORE THEY EXPLODED, BUT THREE PENSIONERS LIVING NEARBY WERE TAKEN TO HOSPITAL IN SHOCK. THE BOMBERS ESCAPED ON FOOT BUT LEFT BEHIND A VAN WHICH HAD BEEN HIJACKED ON THE CATHOLIC FALLS ROAD. THE ARMY BLEW IT UP, BUT IT CONTAINED NO BOMBS. THIS MORNING WE NOTED A CAR PARKED OUTSIDE THE POLICE STATION ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE CONGEN. IT HAD GONE THROUGH CONTROLLED EXPLOSIONS: THE TIRES WERE INTACT, BUT THE CHASSIS WAS A SHELL.

5. IN CRAIGAVON, ABOUT 25. MILES WEST OF BELFAST, POLICE YESTERDAY FOUND IN A CARAGE ENOUGH MATERIAL TO MAKE SOME 60 FIREBOMBS; 36 INCENDIARIES COMPLETE WITH WATCHES, BATTERIES AND GAS IGNITERS, AND IN ADDITION 25 EMPTY STEREO CASSETTE CASES, 18 WATCHES, 150 FEET OF ELECTRICAL CABLE, SCOTCH TAPE AND INSULATING TAPE, SOLDERING IRONS, 63 GAS IGNITERS, 63 BULBS, BATTERIES, RUBBER GLOVES, AND UBNITION PINS.

6. COMMENT: WE NOTE THAT EXCEPT FOR CHRISTMAS DAY THERE HAS BEEN AT LEAST ONE EXPLOSION IN NORTHERN IRELAND EVERY DAY SINCE NOVEMBER 29. THE NUMBER HAD GONE DOWN SOMEWHAT AFTER THE POST-CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR SEERIES. PROBABLY THE CURRENT SPECTACULAR IS TIMED TO MAKE DIFFICULTIES FOR SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NI ROY MASON AT QUESTION TIME TODAY IN THE COMMONS (BELFAST 009). JUSTLY OR NOT, MASON NO DOUBT WILL BE REMINDED SHARPLY OF HIS RECENT STATEMENTS ON THE SUCCESS OF THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE TERRORISTS (DUBLIN 0011).STOUT
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PAGE 03 BELFAS 00010 121227Z

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